

This is an enormous comfort for senior Americans, especially those who have come to a point in their life where they have come to where they have pretty well come to depend on Medicare being there. For 3 years now, we have had recurring reports from the Medicare trustees that the system faced solvency problems, and for 3 years we have tried to reach an agreement with the White House by which we could address this solvency question so we could give peace of mind and comfort and a certain sense of assuredness to our senior citizens.

So when I look at this agreement and realize that one of the first things we have done in this agreement, and thanks largely to the persistence and the thoughtful work of the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. HASTERT], who has dealt with this problem in the greatest of detail, is we have assured that solvency of Medicare. Mom and dad do not have to worry. Their health care needs will be there, preserved.

That is very important. And yet we have done that in a manner that is respectable to their desire and their concerns about their grandchildren, our grandchildren.

We have a budget that clearly drives consistently to balance no later than the year 2002. Why do I say no later than the year 2002? By virtue of the manner in which we account for things in Washington, this is the least optimistic estimate we could make about when we get that arrival date for balance. We do that with real permanent and immediate reforms in all entitlement spending programs that assures that the great compassion of the American people will be there and available to the most vulnerable of our American citizens, particularly the elderly and the children that depend upon the programs of the Federal Government for food and clothing and shelter.

But as we reform those programs and make them more responsible and more responsive to the needs of the truly needy, we also make room for budget savings in the future, and then we are able to couple that with tax relief.

We were talking here a little bit about tax relief, and I would like to talk about that one tax relief that people do not always identify as a family tax benefit: the reduction in the capital gains tax. As the gentleman from Illinois knows, I am an economist by training and, of course, the first testament of the discipline of economics is Adam Smith's wonderful work "The Wealth of Nations," written, incidentally, in 1776, where Adam Smith laid out a principle that has been known and respected by economists ever since. Never has it come into doubt in the development of the discipline of our field that the road to economic progress, economic growth, is through abstinence and capital formation, savings, and the building of productive capacity. And that, immediately, in the person of a family, translates into more, better jobs with better chances of promotion.

And what is that heightens the heart of a mom or a dad, or for that matter even more so a grandma and a grandpa, than to see their young ones finish their education, their schooling and their training and find themselves able to launch into a career where they can begin to develop their own family with the confidence that the jobs are there, the promotion will be there, the pay raise will be there.

As we do that, and we have that economic growth, and we have so much room for a larger growth rate for the American economy, just to get up to the historic average we could grow by at least a percentage point more than we do, that means so much in the lives of our children and our grandchildren.

People do not understand that. They think of the capital gains tax reduction as something that is done for business. It is not that at all. It is done for these youngsters finishing college and looking for a job and looking for a promotion when the first baby comes along, looking for a raise when the time comes for the braces.

□ 1845

That is what capital gains tax reduction is all about.

The other aspect of this agreement that I think heightens the heart of our senior citizens especially is after a lifetime of hard work, and let us face it, we work for our children each and every day of our life.

I remember when I was a youngster, I sort of implored to my dad, I said, "Now, Dad, they've got a Mother's Day and they've got a Father's Day. Why don't they have a kids day?"

He said, "Well, son, every day is kids day." I think he was right. Every day of his life was worked in devotion to me and my needs as we do for our children, and then for us to be able as we come along to more able take the accumulation of our life's work and our savings and our investment and the business that we built or the farm that we created and be more able to leave that to our children. We find that our life's work has that enormous payoff. Can you imagine what that means in the life of grandma and grandpa, mom and dad, and then again in the life of those children.

This is a good budget agreement, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois again for yielding.

Mr. HASTERT. I thank the distinguished majority leader from Texas. He certainly speaks words of wisdom. We listen to those all the time. I thank the gentleman very much for being here.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1469, EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL FOR FISCAL YEAR 1997

Mr. MCINNIS (during the special order of the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. HASTERT) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report

(Rept. 105-97) on the resolution (H. Res. 149) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1469) making emergency supplemental appropriations for recovery from natural disasters, and for overseas peacekeeping efforts, including those in Bosnia, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PLIGHT OF ECUADORAN PRISONERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JENKINS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to talk about my recent trip to Ecuador. I met many people who have been in prison for years, sleeping on dirty floors and eating unsanitary foods. There is no hope for a trial. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the laws of these countries do not work unless there is a justice system to administer them.

Let me begin by quoting from the State Department 1996 human rights report on Ecuador:

The most fundamental human rights abuses stem from shortcomings in the politicized and ineffective legal and judicial system. People are subject to arbitrary arrest. Once incarcerated, they may wait years before going to trial unless they resort to paying bribes. Other human rights abuses included isolated instances of killings, tortments and other mistreatment of prisoners by the police; poor prison conditions; government failure to prosecute and punish human rights abuses; discrimination against women, Afro-Ecuadorans and poor people in general.

Last month I traveled to Ecuador to visit American prisoner Jim Williams in the Guayaquil Penitentiary. I have a picture here of Jim and his wife. Jim has been in prison at this time for 9 months. When I traveled, I carried his wife. For the first time in 8 months, she and her husband saw each other.

Jim Williams is an American. He is a businessman from Jacksonville, FL, and he has been held in this prison for the past 8 months.

Several months ago, Mrs. Robin Williams, wife of Jim Williams, along with Charlie Williams, brother of Jim Williams, came to my office in Jacksonville to discuss the imprisonment of Jim Williams. They asked if I would travel to Ecuador to help investigate his situation.

After I arrived in Ecuador, two factors became apparent. First is that the Ecuadoran judicial system, including the courts and prisons, is in a shambles, in a country where poverty is the norm and a typewriter is a luxury.

The second is, the United States officials in Ecuador have an overriding role to combat drug trafficking, particularly of Colombian cocaine. Officials related to me that because of the United States pressure for drug suspects to be apprehended, there is a